Lawrence, Kansas,
20th Nov., 1863.

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Dear Sir:

I am in due receipt of your kind invitation to attend the 33d Anniversary Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and nothing would afford me more gratification than to accept it. But my duties here forbid my leaving the State at this time, and therefore I must forego the ~~sincere~~ genuine pleasure it would ~~afford~~ give me to be with you on that interesting occasion.

Though not a member of the American Anti-Slavery Society I am a believer in it. I was never a member of any anti-slavery organization until I came to Kansas, and united with the people in the formation of the Free State party. ~~I was~~ am A native of Maryland, ~~and~~ and ~~was~~ brought up in a part of the State where Slavery ~~had never been~~ was never very strong, but where enough of it existed to enable me to learn ~~what it was~~ by actual observation, what it was, ~~I think, therefore, that I~~

I think I present an example of natural and spontaneous anti-slavery growth, unaffected by any artificial stimulants. In other words, I judge myself a self-made anti-slavery man, as far as it is possible for any one to be such; and in the unprejudiced and independent spirit of such a character, I recognize in the American Anti-Slavery Society the primal agent in the regeneration of the American Nation, which is now in progress.

This Society started out with the proposition that Slavery was wrong and ought to be abolished; and it went to work in a very exemplary manner, ~~to accomplish~~ to effect that object. In this enterprise was involved a Revolution. Slavery could not be abolished as long as the Nation was constituted on a pro-slavery basis, because, thus, the Nation stood between Slavery and the abolitionists — bound by the law of its being to maintain it and put them down. To enable the abolitionists (~~not~~ using the name in no technical or exclusive sense) to reach Slavery in a manner to destroy it, the

the nation must first be revolutionized and reconstituted on an anti-slavery basis; and this involved first a convulsion of the moral elements of the nation, and then a convulsion of its physical elements — first agitation and then war — first a revolution in sentiment, and then a revolution in Government — the one consequent upon the other, and both essential to the attainment of the end proposed.

The existing war was therefore originally involved in the same ~~idea~~ grand impulse out of which grew the American Anti-Slavery Society. The latter was ~~only~~ preliminary to the former; and the war is only the anti-slavery cause ~~in a military form~~ in a more advanced stage of development. The Army and Navy of the United States constitute now ~~the~~ American Anti-Slavery Societies par excellence!

On the proper direction of the war depends, of course, the success or non-success of the great cause.

In accordance with these views I am free to say that I ~~I have never~~ had no heart in this war, but as it seemed to me calculated to accomplish an absolute anti-slavery

victory ~~result~~. In this respect I was constrained to differ from many of my friends. But it was impossible for me to do otherwise. I ~~hate~~ condemn war on general principles, and can only endorse it ~~when~~ in behalf of and for the behoof of a sacred cause. Considering this war as waged only to make good a claim of authority resting upon some attenuated abstraction of constitutional law — as a brutal and bloody encounter between ~~slaveholders~~ slaveholders for dominion — my soul would shrink from it with abhorrence as a monstrous crime against God. As such I could not but regard it as a flagrant and frightful perversion of an awful instrument of Divine goodness to an end of unparalleled wickedness. And therefore, I have sought, in the exercise of such limited influence as I have, in one way and another, possessed, to prevent its being turned in a direction so challenging the condemnation of mankind and of Heaven.

But it is a source of extreme felicity that the War, through the over-ruling power of the Almighty — who is not "always on the side of the heaviest ~~artillery~~ battalions" — is now adjusting itself to the great principle for the establishment of which it was permitted to be developed.

X

The war has substantially nationalized the North and de-nationalized the South. And by thus constituting the North the nation, it has given to Liberty the power wherewith to conquer Slavery. And no matter what may be the vicissitudes of the conflict, the ultimate triumph of Liberty is assured. Thank God! the Future is ours!

But this assurance should in no wise inspire us with indifference to the progress of events. We must not suppose that any part of the work is finished. The American Anti-Slavery Society must not think of retiring from the field for many a long day yet. The future is ours, but we must do the work necessary to perfect the result.

principles control events, though principles which are not recognized may sometimes be too strong for those that are. We have seen how the North, though unrecognized, has assumed nationality — in spite of the principle, upon which the war was being waged, of the inviolability of the original system, through which Southern nationality prevailed. But the fact should not only exist as such, but to ~~secure~~ make it permanently secure, it should be acknowledged in principle.

It is necessary and proper therefore that the Government should recognize in terms the fact that the nation consists exclusively of the loyal States, and that the seceded States are a separate body, to be conquered and reassumed by the nation upon ~~the~~ its new basis.

The substitution of this principle for the one ~~it~~ the Government has heretofore acted ~~upon~~ on is ~~essential~~ important to the completion of our triumph, and should be pressed upon the ~~Government~~ Administration in every possible manner.

It is supposed that, upon reducing the Rebellion, we may go into

the seceded States, following the ~~former~~ old system, ~~and~~ recognizing the powers with which by that system they were invested — and rebuild upon an anti-slavery basis. But I warn the nation against this insidious ~~mea-~~ ~~sug-~~ ~~gestion~~ measure: We cannot succeed in that way: it is impossible. We cannot rebuild in the seceded States, in the life time of the present generation, without embodying in the political organization the elements which now make up the life of the Rebellion. The recent letter of Mr. Solicitor Whiting on this point is admirable and conclusive. Shall we confer the power which the Federal Constitution gave to the seceded States, when they were in the Union, upon such men as are now fighting the battles of the South with the expectation that they will exert that power to perfect the results of an anti-slavery movement? This is undoubtedly the stupidest idea of the day. The very moment these men should again come into our Government, they would seek to modify and ~~perf~~ pervert — to neutralize and undo — all that had been

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* Uniting with their friends and former allies ~~of~~ in the North they would revive the Democratic or organize a new Party, and resume their former supremacy.

accomplished for freedom. They would strive in every way to keep the negroes a degraded and servile class; and would stand for ascendancy as a unit against the anti-slavery party in that behalf.* This is therefore only another method of reproducing the old order of things, and defeating the legitimate result of the great progressive movement of the North

In my judgment there is ~~ab~~ no absolute safety ~~[illegible]~~ but in following the clearly defined course which it seems to me Providence has marked out for us, namely, to recognize the loyal States as the nation and the disloyal as a body irrevocably separate and distinct therefrom; and then to conquer the latter and reorganize it in our own time and upon our own principle.

Let us not be deceived; let us watch and pray. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

I cordially reciprocate the generous and heroic sentiment with which you address me, and subscribe myself

Yours "to break every yoke," M. F. Conway.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Esq.

Hon. M. F. Conway
Lawrence,
Kansas.

Nov. 20, 1863.